Welcome to the Spring edition of **News from the Fen**, the community newsletter for the National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision.

Packed with interesting articles and news, the Newsletter is delivered quarterly to households in villages surrounding the Vision lands, elected representatives and key stakeholders.

Highlights this issue include:-

Reach Lode Bridge brings Lodes Way Closer– (Page 1) Construction has begun on a new crossing over Reach Lode – Explore the magic of the Vision lands on the Lodes Way.

Celebrate Easter at Wicken Fen – (Page 1) Easter Egg Hunts to pond dipping - there's something for all the family at Wicken Fen this Easter.

Lord Smith debates the future at Wicken Fen- (Page 2) Lord Chris Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency visits Wicken Fen on World Wetlands Day.

Wildlife to look out for at Wicken Fen- (Page 3) Your month by month guide to wildlife to look out for when visiting Wicken Fen this Spring.

Wicken Fen Vision at Heart of Cambridgeshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy - (Page 4&5)
David Bethell of Cambridgeshire Horizons explains the importance of green infrastructure and the key role of the Wicken Fen Vision plays in Cambridgeshire's green infrastructure provision.

Warden's World- (Page 6) Volunteer's help create a new woodland on White Fen.

High Tec Hide and Seek - (Page 7) Explore the Vision with the help of satellites as the geocaching comes to Wicken Fen

We welcome your comments on this Newsletter and suggestions for future articles. Please submit comments / suggestions to howard.cooper@nationaltrust.org.uk

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News from the Fen

THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST'S WICKEN FEN VISION MARCH 2010

Reach bridge brings Lodes Way closer

Reach Lode Bridge under construction and due to be opened during the summer: missing link between Wicken Fen and Anglesey Abbey on the way

The missing link in the access route between Wicken Fen, Anglesey Abbey and Bottisham is about to be completed.

Work began on a new bridge over Reach Lode in February and completion is scheduled for early summer.

The new bridge will open up a huge number of new routes for walkers in the Wicken Fen Vision and cyclists will have plenty of new options too, although they will need to carry their bikes over the Burwell Lode footbridge until a new crossing is created there.

The contract for the design and construction of the Reach Lode bridge has been awarded to civil engineering contractors BAM Nuttall. The project is being funded by a grant from Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, the Department for Communities and Local Government and Natural England.

The new Lodes Way will be suitable for cyclists, walkers and horse-riders

The new route between Anglesey Abbey and Wicken Fen is to be called the Lodes Way. The name has been chosen by the Project Steering Group, comprising local community and user representatives and reflects the fact that the route crosses a number of historic local waterways known as Lodes.

The Lodes Way is planned to be completed within the next three years once a new multi-use bridge suitable for cyclists, horse-riders and pedestrians, has been created over Burwell Lode.

Celebrate Easter at Wicken Fen

The Easter holidays are packed with events at the Fen with everything from Easter Egg Hunts to pond dipping.

Come and join the fun and hunt for chocolate on the great Wicken Fen Easter Egg Hunt. The Easter Egg Trail runs from Friday, 2 April to Monday, 5 April from 10am to 5pm each day. There's no need to book, just turn up and join in the fun – there's a chocolate egg prize for all participants. The trail costs £1.50 per child (normal admission charges apply) with free face painting on Easter Sunday or Monda. So make a date to have an egg-tastic family Easter at Wicken.

Other events during the Easter holidays include:

- Pond Dipping on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6, 8, 13 and 15 April,
- make spells and hunt slimy boggles on Fairies, Pixies and Trolls, Wednesday 7 April
- create a masterpiece from natural materials found on the Fen on Springtime Art and Crafts, Friday 9 April
- delve into history and discover life as a soldier of Hereward the Wake, and what it takes to be a Fen Tiger on Hideous Histories, Monday 12 April
- hunt for clues to discover the amazing wildlife at Wicken Fen on Wildlife Detectives on Wednesday 14 April
- follow the treasure trail, hunt for 'sea monsters' and create some swashbuckling craft on Fen Pirate Fun, Friday 16 April.

Please pre-book for these events. Contact the visitor centre on 01353 720274.

STOP PRESS: go to page six for your chance to plant trees at White Fen, near the new Swaffham Bulbeck Lode Bridge, Sunday 28

Lord Smith debates the future at Wicken Fen

World Wetlands Day brought a special guest to Wicken Fen with a visit from Lord Chris Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency.

During his visit Lord Smith participated in a debate with regional Environment Agency officials and representatives of the National Farmers' Union, local farmers and National Trust on the need to balance agriculture and biodiversity in an area where both have a high profile.

Environment Agency Area Manager, Geoff Brighty said "We have to recognise that the fens have some of the richest farmland in the country and we see agriculture as one of our top priorities. We were keen to discuss how we can get the balance right for the environment, for agriculture and for the local economy."

Paul Hammett, Senior Policy Adviser with the NFU said of Lord Smith's visit: "This was a useful opportunity to highlight that the fens are a highly productive and precious resource, which must be protected to safeguard future food production and deliver the environmental benefits we all want to see."

The Environment Agency is working actively with conservation bodies such as the National Trust to recreate wetland habitat in order to help humans and wildlife adapt to the increasing effects of climate change. Across the UK over 90 per cent of historic wetland habitats have been lost and the small patches that remain are often isolated and in poor condition. In the Fens as little as 0.1 per cent un-drained wetland habitat survives today.

International World Wetlands Day marks the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, known as the Ramsar Convention in 1971. The convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetland resources. Wicken Fen is included on the list of 1,874 wetland sites around the world designated as of 'International Importance'.

Property operations manager Chris Soans and Environment Agency chairman Lord Smith at Wicken Fen

"We were keen to discuss how we can get the balance right for the environment, for agriculture and for the local economy."

Wetlands are one of the most important ecosystems on earth. They help to store floodwaters, improve water quality, and act as a carbon store – the wet soil keeping carbon locked in. They are also home to over half of the UK's plant species, and a variety of critically endangered animals such as the water vole and snipe. Wetlands can also be used as productive farmland, such as on the Vision lands which are grazed by sheep and cattle.

CONTACT THE WICKEN FEN VISION

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Wildlife to watch for as spring returns to Wicken Fen Vision

The dark cold days of winter are behind us now and Wicken Fen is beginning to burst into life as warmer longer days herald the return of spring. This month by month guide highlights some of Wicken's wildlife to look out for when visiting the Fen.

Top to bottom: Bittern, grass snake, four spotted chaser dragonfly, wildflowers on the fen meadows

April: the arrival of the first cuckoos with their distinctive call is eagerly awaited. Reed warblers are busy nesting on the reed lined banks of Wicken Lode, unaware that a female cuckoo is keeping a watchful eye on their nests ready to lay her own egg when the warblers leave them unguarded for a few seconds.

The 'boom' of the bittern is carried on the breeze from their hideaway deep in the reedbeds of Adventurers' Fen. Over the wider Vision lands, skylarks proclaim their territories.

Brimstone butterflies with their bright sulphur yellow wings flutter on the breeze whilst grass snakes emerge to soak up the warming early spring sunshine. Peer into a pond and you may catch a glimpse of great crested newts, who have recently returned to the water to breed.

May: the perfect time for an early start to enjoy Wicken's majestic dawn symphony of bird song. Swifts and swallows arrive following their long flights from Southern Africa.

The hairy dragonfly, four-spotted chaser and large red damselfly dart along the waterways. The hawthorn or 'May' as it is sometimes known is in full bloom in the hedgerows, whilst the marsh valerian is in flower around ditch edges. Orange tip butterflies feed on lady's smock or garlic mustard, their oval bright orange eggs can often been seen beneath the flower buds.

June: spring flowers take centre stage this month, look out for the rare marsh pea, purple loosestrife, meadow thistle and early marsh and southern marsh orchids around Sedge Fen. Snipe may also be seen nesting in the fen meadows.

Free admission to Wicken Fen with Bonus Time

Visitors can enjoy free admission to Wicken Fen over the weekend of 20-21 March. The Bonus Time initiative is a spring gift to the nation from the National Trust to encourage everyone to get out and explore the great outdoors.

Launching the initiative Trust Director General, Fiona Reynolds said "This is the perfect excuse to discover what's on your doorstep, revisit somewhere you pass regularly or explore somewhere totally new".

Download your Bonus Time voucher from the National Trust website www.nationaltrust.org.uk

If you're visiting on Saturday 20th why not help us build our new Willow Tunnel. The tunnel designed by local willow weaver, Nadine Anderson, will incorporate a children's seating area between the visitor centre and the café.

Download your Bonus Time voucher from www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Wicken Fen Vision at the heart of Cambridgeshire's green infrastructure

David Bethell is the Green Infrastructure Project Manager for Cambridgeshire Horizons

If 'grey infrastructure' is the built environment of roads and buildings, then 'green infrastructure' is the nature between, around and through towns, villages and cities - it is the natural environment that provides social, economic and environmental benefits.

Green Infrastructure covers a wide range of outdoor spaces including green corridors, such as hedgerows, ditches, rivers and watercourses, disused railway lines and verges, natural and semi-natural habitats for wildlife, including Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, woodlands, wetlands including flooded quarries, allotments, public rights of way, cycleways and other recreational routes.

If all these assets exist separately, then why group them together under the heading of Green Infrastructure? Providing affordable housing, the continuing loss of wildlife and biodiversity, threats from flooding, soil degradation and climate change, economic recession and mental and physical health problems are all presenting major challenges to human and natural systems across the country as well as in Cambridgeshire - Many of these challenges and problems can be addressed through the provision of Green Infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure is a way of strategically planning and linking all these outdoor spaces and resources together, and of creating new outdoor spaces and resources, to benefit both people and wildlife. It strives to provide high quality green spaces and services in a strategic, planned and interconnected way. It is about recognising the value – economic and spiritual, of these 'green assets'.

Green Infrastructure is multifunctional – it provides a range of functions or services. It provides places for wildlife, for people to relax and exercise, for food or fuel production, or for

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing regions in the country, with 73,000 homes, 50,000 jobs and over £4 billion of new infrastructure planned by 2021. Cambridgeshire Horizons is responsible for delivering this growth strategy and green infrastructure is a key component of the strategy. David Bethell, Green Infrastructure Project Manager for Cambridgeshire Horizons, explains the importance of green infrastructure and the key role of the Wicken Fen Vision in Cambridgeshire's green infrastructure.

flood protection. Green Infrastructure can perform more than one service and often the services they provide are cheaper and more sustainable than man-made solutions. Green Infrastructure needs to be linked together in networks to provide the best benefits for people and wildlife.

Having a Green Infrastructure Strategy is an excellent way of coordinating the delivery of Green Infrastructure and demonstrating its benefits which is why Cambridgeshire Horizons supported the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-Region in 2006 and is currently working with partners to develop a new, county-wide strategy for publication this year

The Wicken Fen Vision forms a core component of the Green Infrastructure Strategy in Cambridgeshire. The Vision can create a range of Green Infrastructure assets that protect biodiversity and provide different landscapes for visitors to explore – improving people's mental and physical health. By rewetting peat soils and the establishment of wetlands and other natural habitats the Vision has significant carbon storage benefits and prevents the further release of carbon through soil erosion. The Wicken Fen Vision area also offers valuable potential for storing flood water and to allow water to percolate into soils and replenish ground water resources.

Whilst supporting the overall Vision, Cambridgeshire Horizons believes that such a large project as the Vision must balance these benefits against other, competing land uses – both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally and continue to work hard at involving communities and stakeholders throughout the life of the project and beyond.

To find out more about green infrastructure visit www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/our_challenge/ and follow the Green Spaces links

Cambridgeshire Horizons
driving forward sustainable communities

Volunteers bring new woodland to life

Volunteers have planted over 500 trees on White Fen this winter to help create a new woodland habitat.

The 2.5 hectare White Fen, near Anglesey Abbey was purchased by the National Trust in 2007. An 850 metre cycleway across the fen, together with a new bridge over Swaffham Bulbeck Lode were constructed in 2008, as part of the new Lodes Way.

Trees, like the Vision area's peat soils, have significant environmental benefits by storing carbon. The trees are native species such as hawthorn and field maple, some of which were raised by the gardeners at nearby Anglesey Abbey. The small saplings will eventually create a fantastic woodland habitat that people and wildlife can share and enjoy for generations to come.

The National Trust has teamed up with the Darwin Nurseries, part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, who work with adults who have learning disabilities and mental health issues. Co-workers planted an area of White Fen with native willows and will manage the woodland. Harvested willow will be used to make hurdles and fencing which will be sold from the Darwin Nurseries and Farm Shop on the Newmarket Road.

Tim joins the team

Time spent as a conservation volunteer at Wicken Fen has opened up a new career opportunity for Tim Fisher, who has joined the Wicken Fen team as a Trainee Warden under the National Trust's Careership Scheme.

Jobs in conservation can be difficult to find especially if you don't have formal qualifications. The aim of the Careership Scheme is to increase the range of opportunities to begin a career in conservation management

The award winning programme provides a mixture of on-the-job practical training interspersed with periods of residential training at Reaseheath College in Cheshire where students learn the science behind ecology and conservation.

During his careership Tim will also spend time working at our partner properties Orford Ness and Dunwich Heath in Suffolk, giving him a good grounding in management of wetland, coastal and heathland habitats.

Tim, 33, from Sutton, who previously worked in the hospitality industry admits to "being overjoyed at being able to turn my love of nature and the countryside into a career".

Find out more about the National Trust's Careership Scheme at www.ntjobs.org.uk

COME AND JOIN IN... COME AND JOIN IN... COME AND JOIN IN... COME AND JOIN IN...

We will be holding another tree planting day on Sunday 28 March between 10am and 2pm. Everyone is welcome to come along for an hour or two or the whole day, no experience is necessary and we will provide trees, tools and instruction. White Fen can easily be reached on foot or bike from Lode via Fen Road and White Fen Droveway or from the north on foot or bike via the Swaffham Bulbeck Lode Bridge. Limited parking will be available on site.

Take to the water like never before

Last year the National Trust teamed up with the Ely based Fen Paddle Company to offer introductory stand-up paddleboarding sessions at Wicken Fen. The sessions proved a big hit and this year a series of paddleboard safaris have been arranged for June.

Stand-up paddleboarding is a new fun activity for all the family. Similar to a surfboard, after a few minutes instruction on how to balance and paddle, beginners are soon gliding peacefully along the waterways enjoying the unique landscape and nature of the fen whilst at the same time getting some healthy exercise.

The joint venture with the Fen Paddle Company is a good example of how local enterprise can benefit from the development of the Vision both now and in the future. "I'm thrilled to be working with the Trust to promote stand-up paddleboarding" says Roland Gurner, owner of the Fen Paddle Company, "I formed the company as I wanted everyone in my home region to experience the feeling of freedom, physical benefits and challenges of stand-up paddleboarding"

The three hour exploration of the waterways of the Vision area run from Tuesday 1 to Friday 4 June, starting at 9am and 2pm. Safari's cost £50 which includes hire of board, buoyancy aid, instruction and a guide. Introductory one hour paddleboarding sessions (£15) will run on Wednesdays throughout the summer. Bookings can be made on 01353 720274.

Hide and seek – geocaching comes to Wicken Fen

52:18:37N
0:17:29E

Geocaching is a worldwide game dedicated to GPS (Global Positioning System) users. The game involves hiding a 'cache' and posting the location on www.geocaching.com

Community warden Geocacher Emma Shepherd shows Visitor Reception Assistant Jenny Hupe how easy GPS is to use

Set-up by the National Trust with the assistance of local geocachers and the Newmarket & District Explorer Scout group, these caches offer a new way for people to explore the wider Wicken Fen Vision lands and enjoy the countryside.

Each cache contains a log book, as well as information on its location and a family-friendly activity to do. The caches are hidden near to public footpaths and, provided you have a GPS, are free to access at all times.

If you don't have a GPS, why not join a taster session using a GPS supplied by Wicken Fen? Emma Shepherd, Wicken Fen's Community Warden, will be running taster sessions from Easter. Contact Emma or the Visitor Centre on 01353 720274 to find out more.

Can you help at the Fen?

Do you have a few hours to spare, want to learn new skills, make new friends or boost your career prospects – then become a volunteer at Wicken Fen.

We have over 100 volunteers at the Fen, working in a number of vital tasks including conservation workers, caterers, learning assistants, tour guides, boat crew, visitor reception, gardeners and even managing our website. We are particularly keen to hear from people who can help at weekends and bank holidays in the Visitor Centre and the historic Fen Cottage and from wildlife enthusiasts who would like to share their knowledge with visitors.

Full training is provided and out of pocket expenses paid for travel between home and Wicken Fen. To find out more please contact Isabel Sedgwick, Visitor Services Manager on 01353 720274

events@wickenfen

Get afloat with boat trips

Wicken Fen's boat trips start again on 15 May and run to 26 September, every Saturday and Sunday plus Bank Holidays. Trips depart at 11.30am, 1pm, 2.15pm and 3.30pm.

Saturday 1 – Monday 3 May
Wildlife Photography Exhibition
Enjoy the stunning wildlife photography of local photographer, Jeff Harrison

Sunday 2 & 9 May, 6am
Dawn Chorus Boat Ride
The most leisurely way to enjoy the early morning birdsong of Wicken Fen. £25 (includes full cooked breakfast)

Saturday 15 May & Saturday 5 June, 10.30am-12.30pm
Konik Pony Walk (7+ years please)
A fascinating walk out to our grazing animals with the grazing warden. Adult £6.50, child £3.25

Friday 28 May, 7.30pm
Dusk Chorus Walk
Enjoy a guided walk as the birds of Wicken come in to roost. Adult £6.50, child £3.25

Tuesday 1 & Thursday 3 June from 12 noon
Pond Dipping for All
Tickets £1.50 for 30 minute session

Tuesday 1 – Friday 4 June, 9am & 2pm
Paddleboard Safari into the fens
A three hour guided exploration of the waterways of the Wicken Vision area.

Friday 18 June, 6.30pm or 7.30pm
Midsummer Boat Trip and barbecue
Adult £18, child £15

Sunday 20 June, 2pm
Wildflower Walk
Your introduction to the unique flowers of the Fen with flowering plant expert Pete Stroh, Adult £6.50 child £3.25

Saturday 26 June, 7.30pm
Midsummer Supper and Safari
Enjoy a light supper, followed by a twilight safari on the Fen. Adult £18, child £15

Sunday 27 June, 10.30am
Summer Walk with the Warden
Adult £6.50, child £3.25

Please book early to avoid disappointment as numbers are limited. For further information and to book please contact the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre, telephone 01353 720274.

The Wicken Fen Vision is supported by a wide range of partners including:

Cambridgeshire County Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Cambridge City Council

Natural England

EEDA East of England Development Agency

Greater Cambridge Partnership

Cambridgeshire Horizons driving forward sustainable communities

Environment Agency

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